

Testimony of Christine Chapman, RN  
SB 968 an Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels  
Public Health Committee  
March 15, 2013

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Christine Chapman. I am a Registered Nurse at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital.

Thank you for allowing me to share my input concerning staffing issues in the hospital setting. My experiences in short staffing is mainly on the medical surgical units. The rehabilitation unit that I am presently working is fairly staffed. I remember one evening shift that I worked that is unforgettable.

I worked an evening shift on a special medical surgical unit that had a patient mix of pediatric and adult patients. I was assigned to 5 patients -2 pediatrics and 3 cardiac adult patients. Each patient needed to be monitored closely. One adult had O2 saturations that were dropping in the 80's; one adult had rhythm changes (second degree block) and one new patient that had an electrolyte imbalance which soon on arrival the patient had a lethal ventricular tachycardia heart rhythm. My 2 pediatric patients: one 6 yr old with acute asthma and one 2 yr old with pleural effusions. I remember the pediatrician was upset with me because I was not medicating her on a timely manner and this toddler was so sick he was transferred to Yale the next day. The patient mix was challenging due to the patients' ages and working with 2 different specialties. I soon realized that this was not an ideal nursing assignment even for the most seasoned nurse.

This experience, and many others prior to it, provided the necessary fuel to testify approximately 5 yrs ago to the Public Health Committee to mandate hospitals to develop guidelines to staff their units safely. Unfortunately, readdressing this issue is needed.

It is true there are many other factors that weigh on staffing decisions and we should have careful study in to all of them but improved reporting of staffing plans and actual staffing levels will go a long way to advancing our understanding of those issues. Nursing staff are held accountable for providing safe care and documenting that care, SB 968 will give support to all nurses working at the bedside.

My views are based on 26 years of bedside nursing - 19 years of medical surgical; 8 years of pediatrics and approximately 7 years of rehabilitation nursing. I earned my BS degree in nursing in 1984 and approximately 3 years earned a certification in rehabilitation nursing.